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## **REORGANIZATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

BY REV. PAUL MICOU, ASSOCIATE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In these days changes of administration in churches take place so fast that it is hard to keep up with them. But when one church has achieved the goal of complete unification of its central agencies it is worth the time of this Council of Church Boards of Education to hear of it.

There are no longer separate boards in the Episcopal Church. All the activities of the old boards, and of what might have been new boards had the former system been continued, are now being carried on by departments of the Presiding Bishop and Council, to wit, missions, religious education, Christian social service, finance, publicity and the nation-wide campaign. The General Convention elects a Presiding Bishop\* and surrounds him with an elected council of bishops, clergymen and laymen. This Council has the power of administering all general church affairs between conventions, and to do this organizes itself into departments employing expert administrators as secretaries to execute its wishes. The Council consists of twenty-four persons remaining in office until their successors are elected, 16 members being elected by each triennial General Convention. The Council meets four times a year; the departments, as frequently as they wish.

There is one interesting by-product of this reorganization. The women claim that because the General Convention did not elect any of their sex to the Council, they must organize separately as an auxiliary to the Presiding Bishop and Council. Hence seven great societies for different phases of women's church work have come together in the Church Service League, but the general church work for women (as distinct from special work such as the Church Periodical Club or the Church Mission of Help), will continue to be done by the Woman's Auxiliary.

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\*Heretofore the Presiding Bishop has held office by seniority, and until the next vacancy occurs the head of the Council is known as the President of the Presiding Bishop and Council.

The former Board of Missions was the only board which had large invested funds. It was easy, therefore, to make the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the corporation administered by that board, the holding corporation for all the departments. There were no separate boards of home and foreign and women's missions, as in some other churches. The former General Board of Religious Education was also incorporated, but held very few trust funds. One reason for this is that the "Church colleges" have never been related to the Board of Education, as they all had independent existence before that board was created. The Commission on Social Service had never been allowed the privileges of a board, so it had no holdings to complicate the reorganization. Thus the whole matter was much more easily arranged than could be done by some churches which have a large number of incorporated boards with large holdings.

No doubt the reorganization was hastened by the nationwide campaign. The General Convention, having endorsed this joint project of the former boards, felt that a new grouping of the central agencies was necessary to see the campaign through and to make proper use of it. On its financial side the campaign meant not merely the raising of a sum of money, but a complete reorganization of the fiscal system of the church. Under these circumstances, it is not to be wondered that in the first year the campaign did not reach its goal, but it did double the gifts of the church, and reached the people of small means in the congregations as never before. The church will gather momentum and the third year will probably see the annual goal of nearly fifteen millions achieved. After that there will be a new survey and a new goal set for the next triennium.

Those who hear or read these words will be most interested in the reorganization in religious education. There is one fundamental principle here which will tell the story in a word. The department surveys the field of religious education, and, having discovered the major problems, creates *commissions* to solve them. These commissions are boards of strategy, thinking ahead of and planning for the local worker who cannot see beyond his own parish and community. If a commission solves its problem, it is discontinued. Thus the department does not aim to build up work over all the country financed

from the central Council, but rather to stimulate the dioceses to be responsible for such work. Furthermore, the commission plan enables the department to use the ablest men and women in the country along the lines of their interest and special talents. To date over two hundred different people are being used in thirteen commissions, and their wishes are being executed by five secretaries. Without this method of working by commissions a much larger staff of secretaries would be needed and not so much good will created or co-operation secured throughout the country. On the staff one secretary may be assigned to several commissions according to his special abilities. A list of these commissions will show the lines along which the department is working in 1921 :

Commissions on

Student Work.

Survey of Church Colleges.

Recruiting, Training and Admitting Men to the Ministry.

Advancing the Church's Interests Among Boarding Schools.

Teacher Training.

Development of Primary Courses of the Christian Nurture Series.

Development of Senior Courses of the Christian Nurture Series.

Provincial Boards of Religious Education.

Vocational Guidance and Recruiting of Young People.

The Church School Service League.

Pageantry.

Registration and Reference of Church Workers.

Co-operation with Public Schools for Week-day Religious Instruction.

My own field is the college and university work, and here we have found it desirable to give undergraduate students their own organization which is an auxiliary to the Presiding Bishop and Council, just as the women's work is auxiliary. This organization is called the National Student Council of the Episcopal Church and has given the students a very healthy share in the work and a voice in its control. This Coun-

cil is a body of people made up to represent the students themselves, professors, clergy in college communities, bishops, and secretaries and members of the Presiding Bishop and Council. It is the executive body through which the various departments secure action on the plans they develop for college students. It has also proved a means of binding together the widely differing college church organizations through a program of work (worship, religious education, church extension, service and meetings) which it requires each society or club to adopt before it can become a "unit." To date there are thirty-nine units, and others are applying for recognition.

We are not following the plan of some of the churches for a large number of college or university pastors supported by a central board, but are working through special workers in the local church receiving diocesan aid where necessary. However, there are at present seven men in as many colleges, who are specially related to me in a policy forming group. In each case they do the local work as it would normally be done if the Department of Religious Education did not share in it, but they regard their college fields as laboratories where policies can be tried out which have been determined in our meetings two or three times a year. They also represent our department in student meetings and conferences in their section of the country, do a small amount of visitation of other colleges, and act as registrars of students who volunteer for salaried lay work in the church, for mission fields or for the ministry. This plan enables us to build for the future on sure foundations, and renders it unnecessary to keep a large staff of secretaries for college work. We never lose sight of our principle, that "wherever expedient the parish should be the unit through which college work is done." We have a mailing list of about 250 clergy in college communities on whom we count for the spiritual oversight of our students in the normal schools, colleges and universities to which they minister.